



# ARCO IRIS

## BILINGUAL CHILDREN'S CENTER

**February 13, 2023**

**Testimony Concerning Support for:**

**SB 350: Early Childhood Development-Child Care Scholarship Program-Funding**

**Submitted to the Senate Committee on Budget and Tax**

**Ruth Carolina Reyes**

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As the director and owner of Arco Iris Bilingual Children's Center, I support SB350. The childcare community is very thankful to the senators and delegates from our dear state of Maryland who have expressed so much interest in our advocacy efforts and testimonies of the everyday struggles we encounter, particularly during the pandemic. But please keep on supporting us!

The families I serve are thankful that many of them can now receive assistance from the child care scholarship. Scholarship rates have risen from their abysmal level of the 9th percentile of

the market to the 70th percentile; income eligibility was expanded to just over \$90,000 for a family of four, and copayments were eliminated for many families.

Our families are returning to the workforce and this assistance is essential for many of them, especially for those families headed by single mothers. Many of them do not have adequate support systems, so they are especially vulnerable. Think about this: you are that mother's support system, please don't take it away. You must continue offering this opportunity so we can have more families accessing quality early childhood education.

A cut to the childcare scholarship brings many risks to our families, children, childcare providers, as well as the economy overall. I began with only three children utilizing the scholarship; I now have 12. Early childhood education and care starts at birth. Don't abandon Maryland's families.

As a childcare director and a passionate advocate for my field, I believe strongly in the concept of purpose and partnership. The public school system, private childcare centers, family childcare providers, families, and government must all unify to make early childhood education a priority for Maryland's children.

Thank you for supporting SB350

Sincerely,

R. Carolina Reyes